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ABSTRACT

Educating disadvantaged students will demand a national commitment to increasing the resources devoted to the task, restructuring the schools in which the disadvantaged are educated, and conducting research needed to make those schools more effective. Educationally disadvantaged students have been exposed to insufficient educational experiences in school, at home, and/or in their community. They may comprise 35-40 percent of the student population, and share one or more of the following characteristics: (1) minority group membership; (2) poverty; (3) single-parent families; (4) poorly educated mothers; and (5) limited English proficiency. Their numbers are projected to increase rapidly, with catastrophic consequences for the social and economic well-being of the nation. A review of the effectiveness of existing federal and local perinatal health care and preschool, kindergarten, and elementary school programs for the disadvantaged indicates that their positive outcomes fade quickly over time or that their scope is inadequate for the number of disadvantaged students and the severity of their problems. The effectiveness of most secondary school programs has not been systematically evaluated. Each level of the educational system must have the capacity to gather systematic student data in order to use resources effectively. The following strategies for restructuring schools to better gather and use that data are suggested: (1) flexible rules and programs; (2) goal setting and monitoring to increase individual autonomy; (3) self-contained teaching/learning units; (4) "slack" in staff resources; (5) more effective hierarchies; (6) bridging or lateral relationships; and (7) more sophisticated vertical information systems. An index, brief biographies of the authors, and a list of 515 notes and references are appended. (FMW)

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